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THE 25TH SESSION OF THE WFTU'S EXECUTIVE BUREAU

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The first quarterly meeting of the WFTU Executive Bureau for the year 1954 took place in Vienna, Austria, on 23 March. Originally, the gathering was to have been held on 22 February, but it was postponed, presumably to await the end of the Berlin Conferences.

#### The proceedings:

- a. Reaffirmed and brought up to date the analysis of the "international situation" presented at the Third World Congress of the WFTU (Vienna, October 1953) and endorsed the tactics of the Communists in the labor field which had been spelled out at the Congress.
  - b. Analyzed the weaknesses of the WFTU complex and set forth remedies -- most significantly, for closer control over the movement by the WFTU leadership and for closer coordination on a regional and local scale.
  - c. Made public the closer coordination between the WFTU and the World Peace Council.
  - d. Announced a number of forthcoming meetings of WFTU components.
1. Particularly significant in the Executive Bureau's confirmation of the analysis presented at the Third World Congress were the following "new developments" in the international situation:
    - a. "New and concrete possibilities for action are taking shape for the working-class movement of Latin America." Saillant stated that the Tenth Inter-American Conference at Caracas shows that antiimperialist feeling is growing and "there are tremendous possibilities for a broad democratic front for national independence throughout all the countries of Latin America."
    - b. "The unity of the governments in the countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization remains very precarious." The Eisenhower policy of "armed peace" and "rearmament" is causing disputes and differences and is "increasing the contradictions within the ruling classes, the bourgeoisie." According to Saillant, proof of this trend is found in the results of the Berlin Conference, which constitutes "a victory for the policy of negotiation." "Contradictions between rival capitalist groups are becoming more clearly apparent"

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than at the time of the Third World Congress. Nowhere are these contradictions more evident than in the European Coal and Steel Community, which is being destroyed by the inevitable "contradictions and rivalries which it was designed to eliminate."

- c. Saillant stated that the proposal of the World Peace Council for "A Great International Meeting for the Lessening of International Tension," a proposal which is to be fully supported by the WFTU, is of special significance. "The preparation for this Conference sets special tasks for the WFTU and its affiliated centers," which are to be worked out "within the framework of the working relations already established between the Secretariat of the World Council of Peace and the Secretariat of the World Federation of Trade Unions."\* "The WFTU, which brings together the trade union organizations of the European countries whatever their social system, must display initiative in winning support" for "security and peace in Europe through agreement between the governments and the peoples of all the countries of Europe" -- in accordance with the recent Soviet proposal for a "Collective Security Pact" excluding the United States. In this connection, the WFTU will "prepare a trade union conference of all European countries for collective security and against EDC."
- d. Saillant pointed out that the "first symptoms of the economic crisis in the United States are showing themselves," they were, in fact, apparent at the time of the Third World Congress. The WFTU is at the beginning of a period in which it "must increase the fight against the American monopolies and their policy of world domination." In the past the WFTU erred in that it "confined . . . attention to the effects of the American imperialist policy throughout the world but not within the United States itself." In order to rectify this error, note must be taken of two particular aspects of the "battle against American monopoly":
  - (1) "The growth of resistance of the people to the American grip on the national economies and the fight for better wages and full employment."

\* It should be noted that the WPC Secretariat, formerly located in Prague, has recently moved to Vienna and is now located in a Soviet-requisitioned building on the Moellwaldplatz, Vienna IV, (Soviet Zone). It is entirely conceivable that this move to Vienna is directly related to the increased role which the WFTU is to undertake in the "peace" movement.

SECRET

- (2) "The essential link between these struggles in the capitalist and colonial countries with those of the American workers" and the opportunity which now exists for the TUI's (Trade Departments of the WFTU) "to look again at their contacts with the American workers (trade unions or groups of trade unionists)." The TUI's are to make detailed analyses of the social conflicts in the United States arising from the consequences of these "first signs of crisis," and work out special plans of "international solidarity" in all forms.
2. Saillant then restated "four special aspects of the tasks" which were assigned to the WFTU at the Third World Congress:
  - a. "The need to develop to the utmost the united action of the workers, and with this aim to take every measure which can assist this development and create favorable conditions for organizational trade union unity where it is necessary and possible to do this . . . ."
  - b. "The most active and extensive participation, with an ever greater fighting spirit, of the trade unions in the fight for the achievement of immediate demands, for wages, against unemployment and dismissals, against speed-up, and for social security. Give a greater impetus for mass action in defense of peace and democratic rights."
  - c. Increase the effectiveness of the solidarity of the whole international trade union movement with the peoples of the colonial countries and particularly with their trade unions; give them concrete support in their fight for national independence . . . ."
  - d. "The need for a more sustained and consistent effort by the trade unions and the national centers in their organizational work; improve trade union recruiting; organically strengthen the international working class movement by improving the functioning of the WFTU and its Trade Union Internationals."
3. The WFTU again put emphasis on efforts to split the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and the non-Communist trade union movement in general, by wooing workers away from non-Communist leadership through "unity of action," i.e., the support and participation of all WFTU affiliates in any efforts made by any union, (and particularly those not affiliated with the WFTU), or group of workers, for the achievement of improved living conditions, wages, working hours, medical service, and

SECRET

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other benefits which are "legitimate demands." The WFTU plans to show its "sincerity" in championing the "true interests" of the working class in the following specific actions:

- a. Widespread use and dissemination of the "Open Letter of the Third World Trade Union Congress" to all trade union organizations, to "accentuate within the nonaffiliated trade union organizations the trends in favor of united action and international trade union unity." The purpose of this letter is "to develop mass opposition within the ICFTU to the reactionary leaders" of the American labor movement who "lay down the law there." In addition, the WFTU will issue a new letter, similar to the first one, with the same appeal -- which letter is to be distributed to all work places and discussed in special shop, and local and regional trade union meetings.
- b. Increased emphasis on the "Appeal to the Workers of European Countries" issued by the Third WFTU Congress. This appeal is to be a means of establishing "broader contact with the West German workers and their trade union organizations," and stronger ties between the workers of West Germany and those of the German Democratic Republic, both of which groups "are fighting for the same aim." The French General Confederation of Labor (CGT) has already sent a letter to the West German Labor Federation (DGB) and similar action is to be taken by the Free German Trade Union Federation (FDGB) of the German Democratic Republic. The TUI's of Miners and of Metal and Engineering Workers are to play a decisive role in building up these ties, for it is these industries which are most affected by the policy of "rearmament" followed by the Bonn government, and by the operations of the European Coal and Steel Community.
- c. Improved work by the WFTU "to put the workers' demands still more firmly" before the U. N. and the ILO. The WFTU is to concentrate its main action on the question of trade union rights and secondly on living standards and economic development. Important speeches are to be made on unemployment and expansion of international trade, on social security, and on the problem of forced labor. Finally, it will "continue to defend effectively" its status in the U. N. and "especially the right of delegates to enter the headquarters of the United Nations." In cooperation with the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, a Communist front, the WFTU proposes to set up a commission which will systematically analyze all anti-trade union legislation and which will assist the WFTU in presenting its case before the United Nations.

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4. Personal contacts between the WFTU and local labor officials are to be improved. The WFTU is "to organize visits by delegates from the Executive Committee of the WFTU and the Trade Department to a larger number of capitalist and colonial countries during 1954, to improve living contacts between the WFTU leadership, the national and local trade union organizations and the mass of the workers; to encourage and speed up measures for the exchange of trade union delegations between the various countries, with special emphasis on action to remove existing discriminatory measures\* applied by the capitalist governments."
5. The WFTU will make "still clearer the aims for unity which (are to be pursued) in the international trade union movement" to "help organizations attached to the WFTU to take up in practice a greater stand for unity in countries where this is necessary." This is to be done by the issuance of a "Charter of Trade Union Rights," to be prepared this coming June by a special commission and approved by the forthcoming General Council meeting in the fall of 1954; the organization of May Day 1954 demonstrations based on this slogan -- the trade union press, meetings and rallies, leaflets and posters, radio, etc., are to bring the aims of the "defense of trade union rights" to the attention of all workers. Finally, "defense of trade union rights" is to be linked to the struggle of the workers to defend their "democratic liberties" against fascist and imperialistic repression.
6. Improved assistance will be rendered to the trade union organizations in the colonial and semicolonial countries, "especially by making more down-to-earth efforts for the training of union cadres." In this connection, the Secretariat of the WFTU is to present a special report on "the program of the trade union education of the WFTU" to the next session of the Executive Committee.
7. The WFTU plans to improve the quality of WFTU publications and the intensity of its propaganda efforts. Because of financial considerations, and the problems of maintaining an efficient fortnightly distribution of the WFTU's magazine, World Trade Union Movement, the WFTU has ordered that WTUM "shall henceforth appear once a month, at the beginning of every month, with 40 pages, with an improved content, having a greater appeal to the leading trade unionists." But, in order to keep its affiliates completely up to date on labor matters, "a fortnightly information bulletin shall be issued in Vienna and sent to the National Centers, the trade unions and the trade union press." The

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\* Refusal of governments to grant visas, entry permits, and other travel documents.

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content of this magazine is to be improved by the expansion of the network of "worker correspondents" who will contribute to it. Finally, there will be an intensification of propaganda, (tracts, articles, posters, etc.) and the distribution of a film on the Third WFTU Congress.

8. The final matter to be considered at the Executive Bureau meeting was the report of Luigi Grassi, a WFTU secretary, on "The Activity and Tasks of the Trade Union Internationals." After showering some praise on the TUI's and their accomplishments, Grassi leveled the following criticism at their work:
  - a. Failure to prepare conferences and international meetings properly. The TUI's have called conferences, sent out a few announcements, and then failed to follow up their invitations with letters which would arouse enthusiasm in the participants, or require their constituent unions to join in the preparatory activities. The result is that the conferences, once they are held, are very formal, unspontaneous affairs.
  - b. There has been a tendency to examine all questions from a general viewpoint. The TUI's of Postal, Telephone, Telegraph and Radio Workers; Chemical Workers; Food and Hotel Workers; Fur and Leather Workers; and Textile Workers have failed to examine carefully the problems of their own trades, or to apply the general analysis presented by the WFTU to their specific industries so that the WFTU program is meaningful to the union members.
  - c. The needs of women and young workers have not been attended to adequately. The TUI's of Textile Workers, Fur and Leather Workers, and Food and Hotel Workers are singled out for criticism in this respect, for it is women and young people who constitute the major portion of workers in these industries.
  - d. Lack of direct communication between the TUI's and their affiliates. The TUI's lack direct liaison with the trade unions in individual countries, with the militants of the countries where the labor movement is weak or where the TUI has no affiliates. Some of the TUI's have created "Regional Liaison Committees" which are to assist them in coordinating activities and improving communications with a given group of countries. According to Grassi, these committees have failed to serve any real purpose, and have actually hindered direct contact between the Secretariats and the national centers or affiliated unions.



SECRET

- e. Failure to understand the true meaning of "solidarity." "Solidarity" has received too narrow an interpretation from the TUI's. It consists of more than the sending of messages of support and financial assistance at the time a struggle is in progress. "Solidarity," in its truest and broadest sense, involves the coordinated preparation of long-range propaganda and information campaigns, based on comparative study and analysis of the economic conditions of many areas, which will make the workers more aware of the opportunities for struggle and improvement of both present and future trade union action.
9. Grassi then proceeded to outline several organizational changes which are to improve the work of the TUI's:
  - a. There will be closer liaison between the permanent departments in the WFTU Secretariat and the TUI's. Particularly concerned are the Department for Trade Union Internationals, the Economic and Social Department, which is responsible for conducting scientific studies of economic and social conditions, and the Press and Publications Department, which will henceforth devote more attention to improving the publications of the individual trade union federations and Internationals.
  - b. There will be a concerted effort to improve the quality of personnel assigned to work in the permanent Secretariats of the TUI's. In the past, the TUI's have depended upon the CGT of France and the CGIL of Italy to supply the staffs for the TUI's; in the future the national centers of Latin America and Asia are to be combed for "new militants" to work with the Internationals.
  - c. The National Centers affiliated with the WFTU will be given greater responsibility with respect to the implementation of the programs of the TUI's. The Departments of International Relations in the National Centers are to assist in the preparation of conferences, in the selection and support of delegations to international meetings, and are to support all returning delegates in their efforts to popularize and make known in their own countries the results of these conferences.
10. The "essential tasks of the TUI's" are, according to Grassi:
  - a. "To intensify, through the most diverse means, the popularization of the 'Open Letter' to all trade union organizations

SECRET

and militants not affiliated with the WFTU." They are to suggest to the WFTU 'sympathizers' in nonaffiliated unions, the concrete actions which they may take to promote discussions among the syndicates, and especially among the workers in the enterprises, shipyards, and offices.

- b. "The unity line is to be pursued by all possible means." The TUI's are to "help in their work the comrades, the 'sympathizers,' who occupy directive posts in unions not affiliated with the WFTU." In the face of the difficulties encountered because of the activities of "right-wing leadership," the menaces of expulsion and exclusion, etc., some of the "comrades" have become discouraged and inactive or have adopted "sectarian positions" leading them to complete withdrawal from these "right-wing" unions and federations. It is a major task of the TUI's to carefully explain the idea of "unity," and the sacrifices and compromises it entails; the TUI's must warn the "comrades" of the dangers of losing contact with the non-Communist labor movement.
  - c. "The TUI's are to elaborate and popularize the most significant struggles of the workers," and to analyze the lessons which may be learned from them. The TUI's should develop the struggle for improvements in the standard of living, emphasizing the campaigns for equal pay, equal work, and the struggle for collective agreements.
11. Finally, Grassi announced several changes which are to promote the growth and expansion of the influence of the TUI's of the WFTU. These changes are:
- a. The Constitution of a new TUI of Chemical, Oil, and Related Industries Workers. The question of the creation of a union of oil workers has been discussed by the WFTU since 1949. However, the decision to take concrete steps to create this group was finally made at the Third World Congress, at which time it was decided that the oil workers might successfully be integrated into the already existing TUI of Chemical and Allied Industries Workers. A preparatory committee for an international conference to be held in the fall of 1954 was to be convoked in Budapest, Hungary, from 12-14 April. With reference to this conference, Grassi stated: "It should be noted that in the countries of the Middle East, where the production of oil is most highly developed, there is not a single legally recognized union for the workers in this industry . . . ." Because this industry represents "the power of the trusts and the most extreme concentration of

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capital," the organization of the oil workers becomes of first-rate importance. For this reason, the "WFTU, and especially the National Centers, must devote the greatest attention to their assistance for the preparation of the forthcoming conference."

- b. Constitution of a TUI of Public Service Workers. The initiative for the creation of this TUI was first taken by the French unions. Prior to the Third World Congress of the WFTU, the TUI of Postal, Telephone, Telegraphic, and Radio Workers; the CGT; and the CGIL had discussed the matter, preparing the way for a larger meeting at the Congress. This meeting resulted in the decision to hold a "World Conference" sometime during the first 4 months of 1955, which conference will establish officially the new TUI of Public Service Workers. One day after the convening of this conference, the TUI of Postal, Telephone, Telegraphic, and Radio Workers will hold its own "Professional Conference," for the purpose of discussing its integration with the new TUI into a "TUI of Public Service and Related Industries Workers."
  - c. Expansion of the TUI of Agricultural and Forestry Workers. Because of the great response of peasant organizations to the program of the TUI of Agricultural and Forestry Workers, the Administrative Committee of this union has proposed a new name for the TUI; henceforth it shall be known as the "TUI of Agricultural and Forestry Workers and Working Peasants."
12. In conclusion, the WFTU Executive Bureau announced the following additional international trade union conferences to be held in 1954:
- a. TUI of Metal and Engineering Workers -- Vienna, 3-7 July, 1954.
  - b. TUI of Leather, Shoe, and Fur Workers -- Warsaw, August, 1954.
- (Note: Subsequently, the TUI sent official invitations indicating the date of this meeting to be 8-11 July, 1954.)
- c. TUI of Miners -- Prague, 3-7 December, 1954.

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